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"IRAN"

USSR+EE REVIEW
SUPPLEMENTSTATUS OF SOVIET-IRANIAN RELATIONS [REDACTED]

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During the Iran-Iraq war, the Soviets have tried to cultivate Iranian favor by conveying limited support for Tehran's position in the conflict. Although their efforts have produced a slight reduction in Iran's expressions of hostility, they have not resulted in a significant breakthrough, and relations are characterized by suspicion. Moscow remains concerned that the release of the US hostages could open the way for increased Iranian economic relations with the West and undermine their own prospects.

[REDACTED]

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Moscow's Efforts To Improve Ties With Iran

The Soviets have tended to favor Iran in its war with Iraq in order to maintain and expand Soviet influence there and to prevent the United States from regaining a foothold. Their refusal to meet Iraqi requests for major military resupplies since the war began reflects, in part, a desire to avoid antagonizing the Iranians. In this connection, however, the Soviets have almost certainly encouraged some East European countries to intensify their own resupply operations to Iran. Tehran has reportedly also arranged to receive some Soviet-made military equipment from Syria, possibly including the Frog surface-to-surface rocket system.

[REDACTED]

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Nevertheless, the Soviets have wanted to avoid making a clear choice between the protagonists and, in order to avoid antagonizing Iraq, have refused to provide direct military deliveries to Iran. A late-September agreement between the USSR and Iran to deliver spare parts for military trucks apparently is part of a longstanding arms supply relationship. The USSR, however, has apparently not made any direct deliveries of ground force equipment since the war began, in spite of existing contracts. This policy has irritated the Iranians, who recently sent an envoy to Moscow to tell the Soviets not to "waste any more time" in fulfilling existing commitments.

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The Soviets have been more forthcoming with economic assistance. [REDACTED]

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The Soviets have agreed to facilitate the movement of Iranian-bound cargo through the Soviet Union, should Iranian ports be closed as a result of hostilities with Iraq. During November, however, Moscow had to turn back cargo destined for Iran because of a freight car backlog at the Soviet-Iranian border. The Soviets may hope that Iran's economic problems, now aggravated by the war and the disruption of traffic to its Persian Gulf ports, will lead to increased Iranian dependence on Soviet transport routes as well as enhanced Soviet economic assistance this winter in spite of the logistics problems. [REDACTED]

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Iranian Reaction

The Soviets cannot be encouraged by Tehran's reaction to its policies to date. Not only have the Iranians made no effort to improve relations, but they continue to search for ways to embarrass Moscow. Prime Minister Rajai, in public remarks after his meeting with Soviet Ambassador to Iran Vinogradov, in early October, overdramatized Vinogradov's offer of future military aid in an apparent effort to disrupt Soviet-Iraqi relations. [REDACTED]

The key issue for Tehran at the moment is the Soviet arms relationship with Iraq. The Iranian Ambassador to Moscow, who has often urged the Soviets to cut off arms aid to Iraq in the past, expressed concern in a recent interview. The ambassador said Iran would continue to seek assurances "in practice" that the Soviets are not delivering arms to Iraq. [REDACTED]

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Tehran has also stepped up its repression of the Iranian political left and remains deeply concerned about Soviet subversive activities. The newspapers of the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party and the independent leftist Mujahedin Party were banned recently, and militiamen from the Tudeh, Mujahedin, and other leftist parties were expelled from Khuzestan Province. A senior official of the Mujahedin was convicted of spying for Moscow on 15 November, after a widely publicized trial, and warrants have been issued for other Mujahedin leaders. [REDACTED]

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One gesture Tehran has made to the Soviets is to take a lower public profile in opposing the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. While the Iranian media still give limited support to the Afghan insurgents, attention has been diverted to the war with Iraq. The departure of former Foreign Minister Ghotzبزadeh--who took the lead in opposing the Soviets--has also helped downplay the Afghan issue. Nonetheless, Iran remains strongly opposed to the Soviet presence. [REDACTED]

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Soviet Concern Over an Iranian-US Reconciliation

One of Moscow's key objectives in Iran remains the prevention of improved US-Iranian relations. Moscow's concern over the perceived willingness of some Iranian leaders to reach a compromise with Washington continues to generate a steady stream of Soviet invective. The Soviets are worried that the resolution of the hostage issue might pave the way for less hostile US-Iranian relations, especially if the United States should release arms supplies to Iran. They probably realize, however, that an end to the hostage crisis would not guarantee a return of the former US position in Iran and that significant hostility toward the United States would endure. [REDACTED]

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Although the Soviets may be resigned to the hostages' eventual release, they hope to slow the process and strengthen Iran's antipathy toward the United States by warning of alleged US preparations for "military aggression" against Iran. [REDACTED]

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Prospects

The Soviets may believe that the war has temporarily strengthened Khomeini's position, thereby preserving Iran's anti-US orientation; in this sense, his longevity serves Soviet interests. On the other hand, Moscow also realizes that the Khomeini regime is unlikely to become receptive to Moscow's overtures. Consequently, it will almost certainly continue to combine efforts to improve relations with the current regime with support and encouragement for antiregime elements that are sympathetic to Soviet interests and that they hope will ultimately prevail. Tehran, for its part, values Moscow's economic

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support but continues to see little need for good political relations and will probably maintain its distance from the Soviets.

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USSR - IRAN

MOSCOW DISCREET ON GROWING DIFFERENCES WITH TEHRAN

Moscow is publicly minimizing its growing difficulties with Iran, responding with limited routine commentary, sidestepping the anti-Soviet pronouncements of Ayatollah Khomeini, and focusing its displeasure on outgoing Foreign Minister Qotbzadeh. So far Soviet media have ignored the 17 August Iranian Foreign Ministry statement demanding that the USSR close one of its two consulates in Iran, although Tehran has reported Soviet compliance with the demand. Only in radio programming for the Iranian audience has Moscow taken explicit issue with Qotbzadeh's 14 August message to Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko. While the USSR appears to be continuing its efforts to steer a middle course on the Iran-Iraq problem, low-level Persian-language comment has hinted that Moscow's patience is wearing thin over the "baseless claims" of Iranian "officials" regarding the Soviet role in the dispute.

QOTBZADEH MESSAGE Moscow's handling of the Qotbzadeh message illustrates its continuing effort to soft-pedal differences with Tehran. The only rebuttal to the Iranian foreign minister's 14 August charges came in a routine-level Savchenko commentary broadcast on Moscow radio's Persian service on 15 August. Acknowledging few of the specific charges in the message, Savchenko dismissed them as a "complete fantasy of illusions." He labeled Qotbzadeh's assertion that Moscow had supplied "photographs" and money to Kurdish rebels "nonsense" and criticized indirectly his characterization of the Tudeh Party as a "fifth column." The commentary ignored Qotbzadeh's claim that arms "packed and made in the USSR" had been discovered in Kordestan, as well as his call for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, an end to "irregular activities" by Soviet diplomatic personnel, and a cessation of Soviet support for Tudeh Party leaders. The only other Soviet response to Qotbzadeh was a TASS dispatch on the 15th—published in Moscow papers the next day—summarizing an article in the French Communist Party newspaper L'HUMANITE that accused him of misrepresenting Soviet policy on Iran in his "recent statements."

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the term "unanimity"--a feature of the reports on the Soviet leader's talks with all the other orthodox bloc visitors--did not appear in the account of his 31 July meeting with Gierek. Instead the two leaders were said to have achieved "complete mutual understanding"--a phrase connoting less than full agreement. Prior to the Crimea talks, the Soviets had downgraded their usual Politburo-level representation at the 22 July National Day reception in the Polish Embassy in Moscow: for the first time in several years, the Soviet delegation was headed only by a deputy premier and a deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium.

EAST EUROPEAN
REPORTING

The East Europe allies have reacted to the Polish events with similar caution. Budapest was the first bloc member to break a general silence on 14 August, publishing press reports on the strikes. The Hungarian and GDR reports of the Polish leaders' speeches have included Gierek's statement that only a communist Poland can be free and independent, and an East German report cited Babiuch's warning about "the allies' worry" over the Polish crisis. Romania--plagued by occasional strikes of its own in recent years--reported Babiuch's remarks on the country's economic "difficulties" without mentioning the strikes.

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Qotbzadeh's message revealed that the USSR Foreign Ministry, in a memorandum dispatched on 9 July, had protested Iran's expulsion last month of the first secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Tehran. That memorandum came in the wake of Soviet media publicity for a Soviet Embassy "demand" that Iranian authorities protect the embassy against provocative actions "up to and including seizure."* Judging from Qotbzadeh's warning to Gromyko in the 14 August message that in the future Iran "will not accept such a tone in a memorandum," the Soviet message may have forcefully restated the language of the earlier embassy pronouncement.

IRAN-IRAQ DISPUTE Moscow's desire to hold the middle ground in Tehran's dispute with Baghdad has been apparent in its sparing treatment of recent Iranian criticism. The only Soviet response so far came in an unattributed commentary, broadcast in Persian on the 16th, which, while exhibiting impatience with Tehran's charges, reiterated a desire for good relations with both countries and a sense of "regret" at their dispute. The commentary rejected Iran's "baseless" claims that the USSR "had a hand" in the dispute and attacked Foreign Minister Qotbzadeh for allegedly proposing an end to Soviet-Iraqi cooperation "in one important field"--an allusion to the sensitive issue of Soviet arms supplies to Iraq. Since Qotbzadeh's 14 August message in fact contained only an indirect reference to this issue, the criticism seemed aimed at Khomeyni and Tehran's ambassador to Moscow, Mohammed Mokri, both of whom recently denounced the Soviet-Iraqi arms relationship.

Recalling the USSR's 1972 treaty with Iraq, the commentary assailed the attempt by some "people" in Iran to condition good Soviet-Iranian relations on a deterioration of Soviet-Iraqi relations and in effect contrasted the policy of the shah's government on this question favorably with that of the present regime. In the past "no one in Iran" thought that Soviet-Iraqi cooperation could be an "impediment" to Soviet-Iranian cooperation, it alleged, even "during the shah's regime."

* See the TRENDS of 2 July 1980, pages 3-5 and 9 July 1980, page 22.

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~~U. S. - PRC - USSR~~

As the 1980 U.S. election campaign enters its final phase, Beijing has sharply attacked Governor Reagan for again proposing "official" U.S. relations with Taiwan. Moscow continues to attack both major candidates and to portray the differences between them on foreign policy as inconsequential.

~~BEIJING SCORES REAGAN POLICY ON TAIWAN, ISSUES STERN WARNING~~

Beijing has reacted vehemently to Governor Reagan's 16 August statement reaffirming his support for the reestablishment of official ties with Taiwan. A 19 August RENMIN RIBAO commentary warned that such a policy would have an adverse impact on Sino-U.S. relations, even implying that it might cause a break in diplomatic ties. The commentary indicated that the issue would have to be the major subject in talks during the visit to China of Republican vice-presidential candidate George Bush, which began on 20 August.

The RENMIN RIBAO commentary, using unusually sharp language to address the issue, clearly signaled Beijing's anxiety about Governor Reagan's proposal to establish an official U.S. liaison office in Taiwan. Thus, the commentary stated that Governor Reagan's proposal had aroused "grave concern" and had "evoked great discontent" among the Chinese people. By contrast, a 14 June RENMIN RIBAO Commentator article had not referred to Chinese concern and had characterized Governor Reagan's statements merely as "a tiny adverse current" in the development of Sino-U.S. relations. The 19 August commentary also went further in suggesting that the implementation of Governor Reagan's policy would result in a break in Sino-U.S. diplomatic relations: It declared--as comment had in June--that such an act would "destroy the basic principle of normalization" but went on to warn that it would also "surely affect the normalization." The June RENMIN RIBAO Commentator article had cited Assistant Secretary Holbrooke's remark that Reagan's policy would "wreck relations" but had not offered that conclusion on its own authority.

The commentary also went beyond the comment in June in calling Governor Reagan's remarks on Taiwan "frivolous" and accusing him of practicing "sheer deception" on the American people by promoting a a two Chinas policy as if such an "absurd" idea would be acceptable to Beijing. Terming Governor Reagan's suggestions "insensible," the commentary urged him to recognize the U.S.-China tie as intrinsic to the anti-Soviet posture China has attributed to him.

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